



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDER
NAVY EXPEDITIONARY COMBAT COMMAND
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VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23459-3024

5400
Ser N8/199
26 Apr 19

From: Commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command
To: Chief of Naval Operations (N957)

Subj: LETTER OF REQUIREMENT TO UPGRADE INDIVIDUAL BALLISTIC
PROTECTION, BALLISTIC HELMET, AND ARMOR PLATES

Ref: (a) NEPO MOU 5400 Ser NEPO/0170
(b) SECNAVINST 5400.15C
(c) OPNAVINST 3501.2K
(d) OPNAV N957 ltr 4400 Ser N95/18U140164 of 30 Apr 18

1. Per references (a) and (b), Product Manager, Infantry Combat Equipment (PdM ICE) at Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC), in coordination with Naval Facilities Expeditionary Programs Office (NEPO), is charged with the management authority for Navy Expeditionary Forces (NEF) individual load bearing systems, cold weather gear, individual ballistic protection systems and flame-resistant gear; which collectively is referred to as "Personal Gear Issue" (PGI).

2. Per reference (c), Navy Expeditionary Forces mission ranges from day-to-day Theater Security Cooperation operations to full-scale Major Combat Operations (MCO) lethal combat operations and spans environments from the Arctic to the tropics. The 2018 National Defense Strategy has adjusted military priorities to near-peer competitor threat focus resulting in new and emerging concepts the NEF will need to support. The primary concepts impacting the NEF are Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations, Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment, Operational Logistics in a Contested Maritime Environment and Distributed Maritime Operations which all may need to be executed within enemy missile engagement zones during MCO. The new MCO focus must be balanced with the enduring threat of nation-state and non-nation state-sponsored terrorism. The primary threat NEF needs to be able to survive with Individual Ballistic Protection is small arms direct/indirect fire weapons/systems (pistols, rifles, machine guns, sniper rifles, and projectile fragmentation).

3. Over the past years, incremental improvements in PGI that have enhanced ballistic protection have also resulted in significant increases in overall weight carried and reduced maneuverability.

4. In response to user feedback and updates to PGI by MCSC, NEF (absent those in direct support to Special Forces, see reference (d)) will transition via a Phased Replacement in all NEF Table of Allowances (TOA) from the Maritime Combat Integrated Releasable Armor System (MARCIRAS) to the MCSC developed Plate Carrier Generation Three (PC3). The PC3 provides the same level of ballistic protection while affording more maneuverability, lighter weight. The total cost of ownership of PC3 is approximately 50% that of MARCIRAS. Plate Carrier

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Generation Three and proposed lightweight hard armor plates would allow Commanders to make the choice of which armor plates to use to fit their operation and mission requirements. Lightweight hard armor plates would be 35-42% lighter than current plates. With armor plates inserted and empty equipment pouches PC3 must be neutrally buoyant. Plate Carrier Generation Three must include integrated passive floatation rather than inflatable buoyance which is necessary to negate puncture risk during operations, ensuring survival and recovery of incapacitated personnel. For Sailors with a full tactical load, additional integrated manually-operated inflatable buoyancy is required to provide positive buoyancy during operations. This inflatable system shall not hinder the ability of the Sailor to climb out of the water or operate his or her weapon for the water. The integrated floatation must be capable of righting an incapacitated person to face up. The PC3 will allow for full freedom of movement by the wearer to shoulder and aim a rifle or pistol without interference by pouches, pads, buckles or other devices. It will allow the wearer to don, adjust, and remove without assistance.

5. Current NEF TOAs are fielded with a mix of the Advanced Combat Helmet (ACH) and the Light Weight Helmet (LWH). These helmets are heavy, do not include a counter-weight attachment to relieve the pressure on the upper neck and are not universally compatible with NEF communication systems. Marine Corps Systems Command is testing and developing the Enhanced Combat Helmet (ECH) as the phased replacement for the ACH and LWH and provides for a more ergonomic helmet while providing appropriate levels of ballistic protection. NECC requires that the ECH include:

- a. Integrated Night Vision Goggle (NVG) or headlamp shroud
- b. Integrated skeletonized accessory rail system
- c. Integrated counterweight kit to reduce neck fatigue
- d. Adjustable tension system to maximize correct fit and stability

6. The high cut variant of the ECH (high cut ECH) provides for compatibility with communication gear. In addition to the requirements detailed for the standard issue ECH, specific requirements for the high cut ECH to support NEF communication systems currently fielded in various TOAs include the ability to wear the ECH unencumbered while using the following communication systems:

- a. Vehicular Intercommunications System(VIC)
- b. Liberator II type headsets
- c. Liberator III (dual com J-TAC)
- d. Silynx

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7. Request OPNAV N957 validate this requirement and submit to NEPO for further coordination with MCSC to confirm unique requirements identified above will be satisfied via the PC3+ECH/high cut ECH combination. Upon confirmation, NECC will coordinate buy plans with NEPO.

8. The point of contact in this matter is (b) (6) NECC N83. He can be reached at COMM: (b) (6)

(b) (6)

Executive Director
By direction

Copy to:
COMUSFLTFORCOM (N85)